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THE MISSIONARY OUTLOOK.¹

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PERIODS of theological controversy have almost always been periods of missionary activity. The very times when those bearing responsibilities have felt most anxious lest the work should be hindered have been the times of its most rapid advance. The reason for this is evident. Intellectual and spiritual unrest are always signs of life, and the eagerness which in one form manifests itself in multiplying the influence of so much of truth as is already possessed in another form manifests itself in search for truth. The Protestant Reformation in Germany illustrates this fact, as do also the evangelical revival and the Oxford movement in Great Britain, and the Unitarian controversy in the United States. You cannot have failed to observe the coincidence between the genesis of Unitarianism and the beginning of American missions. American Unitarianism came into organized existence in 1815, and the American Board came into being in 1810, and the Baptist Missionary Union in 1814. Our own time is another illustration of the relation between theological unrest and aggressive Christianity. Never was there more uncertainty concerning truths which many hold to be fundamental, and never was there more earnest, universal, and self-sacrificing effort in the direction of missionary activity. This is evident from the fact that the gifts for missions in this country in 1880 were \$7,669,000, while in 1890 they were \$13,888,700—a growth out of all proportion to the growth of the population. I begin this address, therefore, with this affirmation: Current disturbances in the sphere of theology afford missionary workers no ground for discouragement. The old theology and the new

¹ Address delivered before the ministers of Chicago, at the University of Chicago, October 4, 1897.

alike and equally believe in the kingdom of God, and their adherents with equal enthusiasm and consecration are seeking its advancement. This is preëminently a missionary era, and yet no one who has studied current thought and life can have failed to see that a crisis in our missionary affairs is fast approaching. I shall aim to state to you some elements in the missionary problem, and then venture to make some suggestions concerning our duty in view of the facts presented.

At home there is widespread skepticism as to the value of foreign missions. This is more general than at any time since the missionary movement began. It is manifest in part in the depleted treasuries, but more in the tone in which this subject is discussed by individuals, and in the way it is treated in newspapers and periodicals. In certain quarters the conviction is growing that Buddhism is best for Japan and Ceylon, Mohammedanism for Turkey, and the teachings of Confucius for China. Moreover, there are in this country and in Europe many who not only speak patronizingly of the ethnic faiths, but who actually avow their interest and even belief in them. Many popular lectures in drawing-rooms and clubs are merely dilutions of some phases of oriental philosophy. Where these are common, interest in missions must disappear. In view of these facts, it becomes us to ask why this condition exists. The answers are evident.

There is an imperfect knowledge of what the ethnic religions really are. The wondrous beauty of many of the hymns of the Vedas, the lofty morality of much of the ethics of Confucius, and the unselfishness of some of the Buddhistic teachings have led to the conclusion that one religion is as good as another, and that effort to supplant one by another is not only useless but absurd. Among certain classes of people superficial knowledge of the essential nature of the ethnic faiths has caused lack of interest in missions.

Another cause is the incorrect reports of those who make the tour of the globe. If a traveler has been in China or India, he is supposed to speak with authority. As a matter of fact, he may not be so well informed as he would have been if he had carefully

studied the problem at home. He did not know the language of the country he visited ; he seldom, if ever, saw the missionaries ; when he did so, he was usually under the direction of a guide from a hotel, whose character and information were both untrustworthy. Missionaries testify that few tourists ever come in close contact with their work. Yet they return and presume to speak with authority ; and those at home who do not discriminate receive their testimony as final.

Another reason for lack of interest in foreign missions is the pressure of work at home. This has multiplied immensely during the last few years. Colleges, hospitals, asylums, Christian associations, social settlements, schools, individual churches, are forcing themselves upon the attention of those who give and those who work, with an intensity that pushes into the background the claims of causes which are farther away. The depletion of the treasures of the missionary societies seems to me to be due rather to the multiplication of appeals than to lack of interest on the part of the people.

Turning from the home to the foreign field, we find that the outlook is different. It was never before so encouraging. The testimony from India, Japan, and China shows that in those lands a movement toward Christianity is under way, the measure of which we have only begun to appreciate. I asked a Japanese in Tokyo : "Is Christianity increasing in Japan ?" He replied : "If by Christianity you mean the church as an institution, I should say, probably it is not ; but if you mean the kingdom of God, it is growing with great rapidity." The testimony of Julian Hawthorne in regard to the influence of missionaries in India is positive and favorable. Those who prove themselves the friends of the common people in times of calamity hold the key to the future. The outlook in Japan is discouraging only to those who do not know the facts. A few years ago a wave of enthusiasm swept over the country. The churches were crowded, and thousands became Christians without knowing what they were doing. There has been a reaction. The growth now is not so swift, but it is more healthful. The tendency toward liberalism in theology is only one phase of the prevailing nationalism. Do not

make the mistake of thinking that it belongs to any one denomination; more or less it is in all denominations, and is a part of the desire of the Japanese to be independent. Formerly foreigners were in the civil service, in institutions of learning, on the railways, and in the mint; now they are almost, if not entirely, excluded. The self-confidence that assumes management of railways, armies, and educational systems insists that it is able to formulate its own theology and carry on its own Christian activities. Underneath that feeling is something sublime which ought to be encouraged. It does not indicate a backward step. There is an eddy in the tide, but the tide itself is setting toward a more intelligent, a more independent, and a more general appreciation of Christianity. In China, in spite of some persecution, under such men as Griffith John and Timothy Richard of England, and Gilbert Reid, Arthur H. Smith, and Henry D. Porter of America, there is real progress. The state authorities, realizing that political changes are impending, and not daring to trust the representatives of foreign governments, are turning to the missionaries for advice. A translation of Mackenzie's *History of the Nineteenth Century* by Timothy Richard, an English Baptist missionary, has already exerted a wide influence and helped to bring the missionaries to the favorable attention of the government. In India, China, and Japan the outlook is favorable, and yet the work has only begun. The native faiths have been stimulated to endeavor along Christian lines, with the result that missionaries often find their efforts anticipated by those who appropriate their methods and repudiate their names. Thus Christianity in its spiritual inspirations is hindering Christianity in its organized forms; but this, too, may be a sign of progress.

Concerning the whole subject I would make first some general and then some special observations.

There are differences between nations and peoples, and what is true of one is not necessarily true of another. The Japanese in Tokyo are no more like the Zulus than plantation negroes are like the people of Cambridge. Those who know about Africa are not necessarily authorities concerning India, China, or Japan. The one country is uncivilized and barbarian; the other countries

are civilized, but non-Christian. The man and the methods which would suit one people would be out of place with another.

There are common elements in all the faiths of the world, and these should be recognized. That was a true utterance of Phillips Brooks, in his address before the Church Congress in Philadelphia: "We cannot speak of that religious character in any disparaging or narrow terms. Everywhere God has made himself known to his children. It is not a mere relic of some primary revelation. Our estimate of it is a distinct and cordial recognition that in no part of the world is there a child of the Father to whom the Father is not manifesting himself today with all the abundance of which that child's life is capable. There is no religious life in the world that is not in the spirit of Christ. There is no life to which the missionary goes in heathenism to which he has not freely to say: 'There is the work of Him whom I preach to you.' That lies at the very basis of the thought of the way in which the great church of Jesus Christ is to be built up in the lands of heathenism." It is one thing, however, to recognize that there are common elements in all faiths, and another to say that all faiths are equally true. Many in un-Christian lands are near to the kingdom who do not bear the Christian name. In some instances their creed is so strangely like the Christian that if the name of one person was changed their statements of belief would satisfy the most orthodox Christians. We must not refuse to see the work which God by his Spirit has already done in the hearts of those whom we would lead into larger light. The cause of Christ cannot be hindered by recognition of the truth in the ethnic religions.

Missionary work requires infinite patience, for in proportion as men are near to Christianity will they be loyal to their old views. Loyalty and fidelity surely have a Christian quality. He who will not lightly give up what he has long lived by is the man who will be loyal to the larger truth when it is made known. Moreover, with those who have been trained in other religions something more is required than that they be brought to a formal confession of Christ; the whole trend of thinking and living has to be changed. Orientals have no place in their minds

for the idea of personality ; a personal God is to them a limited God. Not quickly can modes of thought be changed when they have been growing for centuries. The form of our Christianity is modified by our parentage, and the heredity of oriental people must modify their conception of the doctrines and practices offered to them. Language cannot convey the same shade of thought when it has to be interpreted, or when the word is spoken by one whose ancestry and training have unfitted him to appreciate all its finer shades of meaning. We have made the mistake of expecting too much. The missionaries are but men, and those among whom they labor have to grow away from teachings which have been dear and from ideals which have been consecrated by the devotion of their ancestors.

These suggestions are of vital importance. For the old name heathen must be substituted the word non-Christian. The common elements in all faiths must be recognized as evidences of the indwelling Spirit of God ; and the differences between nations and peoples should lead to diversity of missionary methods.

These general observations lead to a few more definite suggestions. They are the result of long thought and of some observation in mission lands.

In some way Christian people who make the tour of the world should be induced to study on the ground what the missionaries are doing. It is very well to see the statue of Amida Buddha at Kamakura, near Tokyo, but it is more important for a Christian to know well what such men as Dr. Green and General Davis have done for the people of Japan. It is well to visit Peking, but far more important for a Christian to see Griffith John and Timothy Richard. It is worth a visit to India to see the Taj Mahal, but it is worth going double the distance to come in contact with such a Christian enthusiast as Robert A. Hume. Christian travelers ought to get into touch with Christian missionaries, and when they return home make it their business to give accurate information to the public. The facts are all right ; the reports are nearly all wrong. The world should know the facts.

In the future, in civilized non-Christian lands the greater part of the preaching, teaching, and publishing should be done

by natives, and the efforts of the missions should be to train, as fast as possible, Christian teachers and evangelists who shall take charge of the work themselves. They know their people better, and therefore know better how to adjust the truth to individual need. I firmly believe that the day is not very far in the future when missionaries in the old sense will no longer be needed in Japan, China, and India; that their work will have been so well done that it will be better economy to let the natives carry it on than to attempt to direct ourselves. Henceforward the chief effort of missions and missionaries should be to develop a working force on the field.

This leads to another, closely related thought. In the future more attention should be given to occasional lectures. This was the chief recommendation of the deputation sent by the American Board to Japan in 1895. The makers of public sentiment in non-Christian nations are well informed concerning those who attempt to teach them. They have little respect for men of inferior training or small reputation; they have great respect for men of world-wide fame as Christian scholars and teachers. The next step in the missionary service should be coöperation among the missionary boards for sending men peculiarly adapted by character and culture to reinforce the missionaries and to present to native preachers and evangelists in their larger aspects the truths of the Christian revelation. The lectures of President Seelye, Dr. Pentecost, and Dr. Barrows have borne good fruit. A procession should be kept moving annually through the three nations I have named. Especially ought men like Principal Fairbairn, of Oxford, and Professor Palmer, of Harvard, to be brought into frequent contact with the thoughtful and inquiring classes who are now facing the future and wondering whether Christianity has any satisfactory solution for the eternal problems. Second-rate men will not do for this service. The names of the best men are known in those lands, and the teachings of such men only will be accorded respectful consideration.

Essential to the growth of a missionary sentiment at home is a clearer appreciation of the nature of the ethnic faiths by preachers and religious teachers. Our people are reading.

In cheap forms the religious books of the Orient are in circulation. Teachers of Brahmanism and Buddhism are at work on our shores. The question is not an idle one: Has Christianity anything which the other faiths do not have? He who answers that question with an attempt to suppress thought makes an unbeliever in missions and an unbeliever in Christianity. Ministers must be content, if need be, to do less work outside and to spend more time in study, that they may intelligently answer the questions sure to be asked. Our people are more thoughtful than we sometimes imagine, and they will not be fooled. It is quite as important that the differences between our own faith and the ethnic faiths should be made plain as that there should be instruction in sociology or theology. When those living in Christian lands are made clearly to see that there is something in Christianity which no other faith possesses, and which the whole human race needs, they will respond to the appeal. There is little hope of interesting those who are not now interested in missions until there is a more intelligent presentation of the essential superiority of Christianity. This cannot be done by loud assertions or shallow affirmations. The people read; they must have facts. The teacher cannot teach unless he is taught. Theological seminaries ought to recognize this truth. Just now the study of comparative religion is second to none in importance. It ought to be in the curriculum of every school of Christian theology.

Of equal importance is the duty of those who believe in Christ to present a more united front to the world. Now we are divided about non-essentials. Instead of clasping hands in a common fellowship and moving as an army, united and irresistible, we are divided into rival camps. We send sectarian ministers to the foreign field. Small towns in Japan and China have missionaries of different denominations. There is little coöperation where there ought to be absolute unity. If the waste which comes from sectarian divisions were saved, there would be no depleted treasuries. It is not fair to the work at home or abroad to have such misrepresentation of the spirit of Christ as sectarianism presents. It is not important that a Zulu should be in the apostolic succession; that a Chinaman should be immersed;

or that a Japanese should know the difference between Congregationalism and Presbyterianism. Such questions will settle themselves when other and more important ones are answered. The non-Christian reads Paul's question, "Is Christ divided?" and then finds that the church is divided in its forms, in its creeds, in its methods of work, and is sorely puzzled, if not prevented from accepting what is offered to him in the name of Christ.

That the missionary outlook was never more encouraging is largely because the missionaries at the front are forced to realize, what those who send them out do not realize, that they must sink differences and exalt unity.

My final suggestion is this: We should not waste time in longing for the return of the good old days in which we imagine that there was a more consecrated spirit in the church than now. There never was greater consecration than now. The amount given for missionary purposes in one form and another is far larger than ever before. The number of young men and women offering themselves for the missionary service is out of all proportion to what it ever was in the past. There are as heroic souls on the foreign field and on the home field now as Judson and Carey, as Lindley and Mackay, as Henry Martyn and David Livingstone. India never saw a more consecrated or more intelligent worker than Robert A. Hume; China than Timothy Richard, Griffith John, and Gilbert Reid. There are discouragements, but they are only because the work is not moving as swiftly as we desire. There must be many changes in the missionary program. We are at the beginning of the twentieth, not of the nineteenth century. Nothing is done today as it was done fifty years ago. Commercial and industrial methods have changed; means of communication have changed; thinking has changed—our missionary activities must change. As there has been progress in science, in commerce, in industry, in every other department, so there must be progress in the adjustment of means for advancing the kingdom of God to the conditions in which the people who are to be reached are living. And there will be such adjustment if the followers of Christ put their trust in the living God, and in the Spirit of truth who will lead into all truth.